



SOUTHEAST FROM ELLEN'S MOUNTAIN.

"He's a very polite tree," she continued, "but I like the beech better, that's down in the meadow near the brook, where the path turns to come upon this mountain."

"And why do you like the beech better?" I asked.

"Because he is quieter," she replied, "and raises so many nuts for the squirrels. What do you do, Mr. Pine, up here on this mountain-top?"

"I praise God," I said, "from whom all blessings flow."

"And how do you do this?" she asked.

"By performing the duties of my life," I answered. "The old Pine knows no other way it can be done."

"And aren't you going to ask me, Mr. Pine," she said, "to sit down in your house and get rested? I would like to know if hospitality isn't one of the duties of your life."

"It must be one of the duties of every life," I answered.

"Will you please take your hat off and be seated?"

"And where shall I put my hat," she asked, "or where shall I be seated?"

"Why," I answered, "you can throw your hat upon the rocks, and sit right down here by my trunk, or anywhere you like under the broad shadow of my limbs."

"Very well, Mr. Pine," she continued, "I will hang my hat upon these rocks and sit down on this stone. And now I think it must be one of your duties to entertain me, for I have come a long way to visit you. It was hardly more for Columbus to sail away upon the ocean in quest of an unknown land, than for me to venture into the great forest and come up here. And you haven't praised me a bit for either my courage or my achievement. Don't you think, Mr. Pine, that I deserve some praise?"

"You certainly do," I answered, "and the old Pine will hasten to compliment you upon your bravery, courage, and beauty."

"And why my beauty, Mr. Pine?" she asked; "there has been nothing said about beauty. Will the old Pine please tell Ellen what the beautiful is?"

"Thou art the beautiful," I said.

"I am not the beautiful," she said; "nor does Ellen think it is a compliment to be called the beautiful. Have you not read:

'Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good,  
A shining gloss that fadeth suddenly,  
A flower that dies when first it 'gins to bud.  
A brittle glass that's broken presently,  
A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower.  
Lost, faded, broken, dead within an hour.'

"And what art thou, sweetheart, then?" I asked.

"There is something better than the beautiful, old Pine," she said.

"And art thou that which is better than the beautiful?" I asked. But she did not answer.

"Old Pine," she continued, "please tell me why you called me the beautiful. And then please tell me what the beautiful is."

"I have called you beautiful," I replied, "because you *are* beautiful. Never has the old Pine seen such beauty of form or feature. The old Pine thinks that anything is beautiful in so far as it is adapted to the purposes for which it was created."

"And pray, Mr. Pine, for what purpose do you think that I was created?"

"You were created," I said, "to make the world better, happier and more beautiful, now and in coming generations. Thou art of infinite worth—the ever womanly that draws us above."

"But," she said, "the old Pine almost takes Ellen's breath away with so much of compliment. The ever womanly should

be and must be the ever good. Ellen is very willing to be called the ever womanly."

"And," I said, "the old Pine sees that your mind is equal to the beauty of your person—that you are fitted for the highest station, and must become a superb and accomplished woman."

"Oh, stop old Pine!" she cried. "Ellen doesn't know what you mean by these words; but if you mean ought that connects with wealth and its vanities they are worse than idle. She hates all that."

"But," I said, "Ellen, the old Pine knows too much to suppose that you would care for the frivolities of life. The greatest of all accomplishments is the knowledge of one's duties. Ellen would be superb to the old Pine whatever she did or wherever she went. Now the old Pine thinks she will be called to the higher spheres of life, and he knows that she will adorn whatever station she may occupy."

"Please stop, Mr. Pine. Can't you see that Ellen doesn't like such flattery? Don't you see that it annoys her? I love my home and all its surroundings. And when I am grown up—if I live to grow up—I hope to keep the same home, or have another like it among these hills. Ellen wants no higher sphere than she has now. She doesn't think that there is any higher. The highest sphere is the sphere in which we serve God best. This can be any sphere. And certainly there could be none where it ought to be more easily done than in our own beautiful valley, and among these sublime mountains."

"Then, Ellen," I said, "you think there is no better field for life and its development than here?"

"There can be no better," she replied.

"And how would you live this life, Ellen?" I asked.

"Just as I have lived it, Mr. Pine. I would try to make some improvement each day. If the beautiful sun shed its light over our sweet valley, I would be out with it gathering health and wealth."

"But, supposing it rained, Ellen?"

"When it rains I work indoors, old Pine, unless there is some

object to go out in the rain. Ellen isn't much afraid of rain. Quite often I look up at it and let it kiss my cheeks; it seems so funny."

"And if it snows, Ellen?"

"Ellen cares less for snow than she does for rain, old Pine. I most always go out when it snows. I love to put my feet in it and let it cover my socks, and get up on my dresses, and my cloak, and my hat, and crawl down on my cheeks, and get into my eyes, and up my wrists, old Pine, and all over me. I just love it."

"And the nights Ellen?"

"The nights are pretty good to work in, old Pine, especially the winter nights. I think, old Pine, that every one ought to make some improvement every day. It is work that brings success, old Pine."

"But what is success, Ellen?"

"In life old Pine?"

"Yes, in life."

"The being useful, I think, old Pine."

"To whom, Ellen?"

"To all, old Pine."

"And how useful, Ellen?"

"By doing good."

"And what must be the preparation, Ellen?"

"It cannot be too great, old Pine. And so, now, hear what Ellen says, and don't ask her any more questions. The secret of success is work. And Ellen is always at work, except when she is at play, or talking to you. I would add every day to my store of knowledge, old Pine. I would add every day, if I could, to my store of health. And if I were older, and had the opportunity, I would add every day to my store of wealth, for so, too, I would become strong, and better able to lead a useful life."

"Made for quite a thrifty girl, Ellen," I said.

"I guess so, old Pine. So please don't ever annoy me again about suggestions of pomp and nonsense, for I hate them. And I would rather a thousand times, yes, a million times, be a useful girl spinning flax than a useless queen."

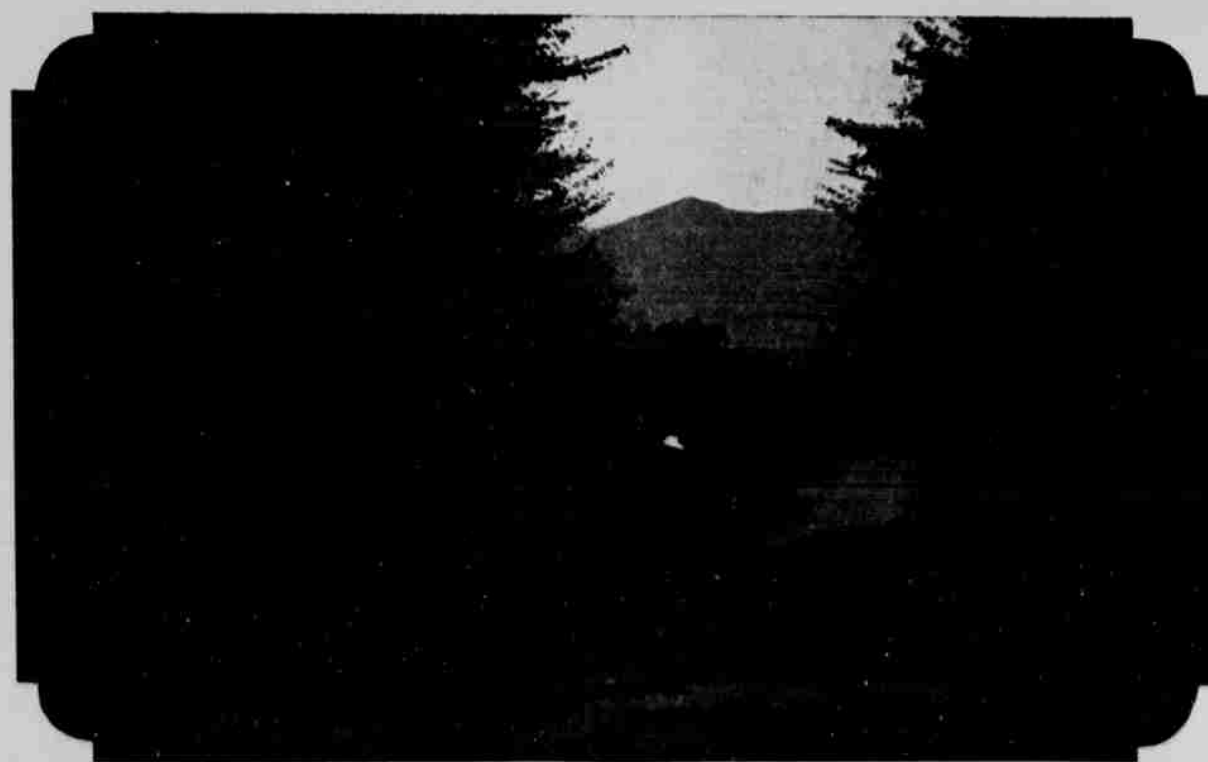
"Why stop at a million, Ellen?"

"I don't stop at a million, old Pine. Words cannot express the difference between what is useful and what is useless. So, now, good-by, Mr. Pine."

"Good-by," I said; "but the old Pine doesn't like to be misunderstood, and least of all by thee. If possible he cares less for pomp and nonsense than Ellen does herself. Why shouldn't he? Of what use would display be to me up here upon this infinitely grand old mountain?—the pride of splendor or the affluence of wealth! The old Pine measures all these for what they are worth; if unwisely used to obtain happiness, worse than nothing. So, too, in regard to office: only honorable or desirable when properly obtained and justly administered. And nothing can be more pitiful than pride of birth, unsustained by merit."

'The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The man's the gowd for a' that.'

"And Ellen has rightly criticised the useless. But all of this leads up to the great questions, does it not, of what life is, what its object, and what becomes of it?"



ELLEN'S MOUNTAIN AND ELLEN.